

on the contrary, I find it is almost as commonly used as coal. It is therefore with good reason our companies style themselves "gas light and coke companies."

It is with pleasure I perceive that the price of gas has been so much reduced at Liverpool, and have no doubt but that a very considerable reduction of price in London is practicable; but it by no means follows, that the companies here will be able to supply gas at as low a rate as the northern companies do, nor does it appear reasonable to expect it. We must bear in mind that they are mercantile speculations, and of course have to look to the interest of their shareholders as well as of their customers. Independently of the enormous amount of capital sunk in their works (which must bear interest), it is to be considered that their expenses are much greater: coals before they reach the works cost more; iron is in the same position; wages are higher, and materials for buildings and repairs cost more;—while from the never-ending disturbance of the pavement for repairs of roads, sewers, and water-pipes, the leakage of the pipes is much greater. It is a barbarous system throughout, and beyond expression costly; yet from the number of conflicting interests there seems but little prospect of a remedy.

One word of advice to consumers of gas. It is very true that the inspectors ought to explain the construction and use of meters to them; but let no consumer therefore think that he understands the matter, and, should any thing go wrong in the supply, take the remedy into his own hands. The inspector is the proper officer appointed to see that the supply is unimpeded; and should any escape of gas or stoppage take place, let the consumer instantly send for him. I know an instance where the landlord of a tavern, finding a slight escape of gas at the union-joint of the meter, took his carpenter's pincers to screw it tighter, broke the joint; and before the inspector could arrive, the cellar and whole house was full of gas. When the inspector reached the spot, the landlord, with an unpardonable carelessness, was about to precede him to the cellar with a lighted candle; but was pulled back by the inspector, who descended in the dark with a lump of clay in his hand, with which he plugged the pipe. Had an explosion taken place, the consequences would have been awful—the house being full of people. It is strange that no one thought of the main cock all the time; but that shews the prevailing ignorance of the proper course to be pursued. This event took place in this neighbourhood only a few months since, and ought to be a warning.

I am, Sir, yours, &c., J. A. E.
Camden Town, Jan. 19th, 1846.

Correspondence.

BUILDERS' ESTIMATES.

SIR,—In last week's BUILDER you gave a statement of the tenders for rebuilding part of Portman-market, and properly ask "How is this frightful difference to be explained?" I appeared for Messrs. King on that occasion, and remarks having been made as to the lowliness of the lowest tender and of mine, Mr. Williams said, he took it lumping. I replied, jumping and not lumping, I was sure. Not having heard any thing further, I presume the lowest party will do the work on finding security for the due performance of it. Two similar instances have recently occurred: the first case was a public-house to be built at Walworth for Mr. Ireland, of Fetter-lane; the result of tendering was, a person named Brown got the work at about 800*l.*, or two-thirds the amount of the next party; of course he found securities, and when he had raised the brickwork up to the plate for the two-pair floor, he could go no further, and parties again had to tender for the finishing. I did so for the party who was next him in the first estimate, at 600*l.* The securities then found out that they were likely to be severe losers, and agreed themselves to finish it, but they did not thoroughly do so, as my employer did it after all. The second case was with regard to works to a gentleman's house at Tollington park, in which, for building a large drawing-room, and offices under, and sundry alterations to the house, a man named Buck got the work at 180*l.*, and the

next tender was 350*l.* I made the remark to the architect that the 180*l.* were only wages for the job, leave alone what the man gave for material; the answer was he should have good securities! Now, Mr. Editor, it is by exposing as you do, this frightful state of things which may be the means of bringing parties to their senses, and lead others to ask what the material will cost, and how much for labour will be required, before they are gulled into becoming security.
I am, Sir, &c.,
Islington. E. PORTER.

DILAPIDATIONS.—CHARGE FOR OCCUPANCY.

SIR,—In your valuable publication of November 22nd, you insert a letter from "A Surveyor," on the subject of "Charge for occupancy," after the expiry of term of a lease, during the time necessary to complete repairs, neglected by a lessee; and you give in a general way, an opinion that such a charge is not customary and could not be recovered, and ask the opinion of your legal friends.

In your number dated December 6th, Mr. Tattersall replies rather fully; and in that of December 13th, Mr. George Smith writes to the same effect; and here, so far as I have seen, the matter ends, which I much regret, for as a landlord I cannot but take a serious interest in the subject; and, therefore, most respectfully draw your attention to it by asking you to peruse carefully your correspondents' letters, and express a hope of seeing the question more fully discussed by both the professions.

Before I conclude, permit me to differ entirely from the argument used, viz. that by non-notice, the lessee is discharged; for the power of entry reserved to the lessee is a privilege, not an obligation, and is frequently disused from courtesy; whereas the lessee's covenant is an obligation, solemnly entered into under hand and seal.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,
London, January 9th. A LANDLORD.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY—CONTEMPLATED ALTERATIONS.

THE change of deans, four having held the appointment within a period of about two years, has tended to interrupt the anxious wishes of the chapter, to devise means of accommodation for the very large increase of persons who throng this venerable church, especially on Sundays, when the rush to get in (until Dean Willerforce caused the doors to be opened half an hour before the service began) was frightfully alarming.

The choir will be enlarged by placing the beautiful oak screens back, so as to include the pillars within the choir; more light will be obtained, by filling the upper parts of the pannels with plate-glass, like Canterbury Cathedral; the prebendal stall will be close to the screen, and two rows of seats for the laity in front of them on either side.

The seats in the centre will be made to accommodate eight persons, four on either side of a division, to avoid confusion in passing each other; these will be continued to a convenient distance from the steps to the communion; the pews will, of course, be removed; the organ also will probably be removed to the arches on either side of the loft, which will be formed into a gallery, capable of accommodating a large number of persons, without altering the appearance or character, of the edifice, which will then be seen from east to west in one uninterrupted view, shewing the beautiful west window to very great advantage.

IMMENSE LOG OF MAHOGANY.—A most extraordinary log of mahogany, lately imported from Cuba, is now to be seen at the east wood wharf of the West India Import Dock. We were not able to ascertain its cubic measurement, but so immense is the mass that it has attracted the attention of all persons engaged in the trade. Its qualities of grain and texture are said to surpass its dimensions. It is the property of Mr. Deletti, who has purchased it for the large sum of 1,000*l.*

SAFETY HARBOUR AT ACHILL.—Sir Richard O'Donnell, Bart., has offered to give 1,000*l.* if the Government will give the remaining amount, to construct a safety harbour at Achill.

Miscellaneous.

COLOUR IN DECORATIONS.—We may estimate the prosperity of a nation by the general enjoyment amongst its people of the necessaries and luxuries of life, but we can form an opinion on its intellectual refinement only by the manner in which the first principles of taste are exhibited along with such enjoyment. The decorations of temples and other public buildings form no true criterion of judgment in this respect. These, for the most part, are the works of great artists, and great artists but seldom appear upon the stage of human life. Such men possess intuitively a knowledge of the principles to which I have alluded; but, although the same degree of knowledge can never be imparted by instruction, yet such a general understanding of the principles alluded to may be diffused amongst a people as to elevate the character of the most simple attempt, and thus assist in rendering its effects visible through all the ramifications of society. But with all our Academies of Art, Schools of Design, Institutes, Associations, &c., there has as yet been no such general dissemination of these first principles; and, consequently, there exist no statutes in the republic of art,—no code of laws for the guidance of public opinion in forming its judgment upon the merits of such works as are subject to the rules of æsthetics. Under such circumstances the decisions regarding works of ornamental art and matters of taste cannot be expected, and it is thus we, every day, see the principles of design openly violated, not only with impunity, but frequently with encouragement. Nor can it be expected that the public should endeavour to acquire a knowledge of laws which many of those who profess to follow high art seem to disregard. Attention to the elementary principles of harmonious colour in the decoration of our ordinary dwellings, in such of our manufactures as admit of it, and even in our dress, will, in some measure, assist in diffusing one kind of knowledge of what constitutes visible beauty, and the more effectually that we are in our climate, for a considerable portion of the year, compelled to dispense with the gratification and instruction which external nature affords the eye, and in the absence of works of high art, to content ourselves with that which the interior decorations of our dwellings present.—Hay's "Principles of Beauty in Colouring."

CASK-MAKING BY MACHINERY.—Considerable sums of money have at various times been expended in trying to bring to perfection machinery for making casks, but heretofore this object has been unattained, some parts always having to be finished by manual labour. A very ingeniously constructed machine (which we have had an opportunity of inspecting) has at last, however, been constructed by Mr. W. Wild, of Bedford-street, Brompton-road. The logs or staves, hoops, and heads, are, in the first instance, dressed off by other machinery, which is being constructed for the purpose; afterwards, the finishing machine is fed with the previously-prepared heads, hoops, and staves, and will in two minutes' time turn out a complete barrel, vastly superior to workmanship to what has hitherto been effected by manual labour. Old barrels can also as easily be repaired by the same machine, the only difference in time being occupied in the taking to pieces of the old barrels previously to substituting such fresh staves, heads, or hoops as may be required previously to feeding the machine. The barrels, when completed, are vastly superior to any heretofore turned out by manual labour, the machine fitting each stave as close as though the whole barrel had been formed of one piece of timber, thus doing away with the necessity, when made by hand, of filling up any defects with rushes, which plan it is well-known has the effect of rendering casks very foul, unless extraordinary care be taken, and consequently much time occupied in thoroughly cleansing them. The inventor is an operative, who has spent much time and money in bringing his machine to perfection, and is anxious to patent it, but his limited means are inadequate to the expenses.—Manchester Courier.

VACANT LECTURESHIP.—The office of lecturer on the principles and practice of geodetical operations at the College of Civil Engineers, Putney, is at present vacant.